



CONSERVATION CONSULTATION REPORT

AGUSTÍN CÁRDENAS / *LE COUPLE*

Prepared for: Catherine Cathers
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Date of Assessment: N/A
Date of Report: October, 17, 2025

INTRODUCTION: RLA Conservation, LLC is pleased to submit the following report to Catherine Cathers at the City of Coral Gables for the development of maintenance recommendations, associated pricing, and additional conservation considerations for Agustín Cardenas's *Le Couple*. RLA has not assessed this sculpture in person and is basing this report on information provided by the client as well as our firm's prior extensive experience with this artist's work. RLA proposes to conduct initial assessment of the artwork upon installation.

In summary, outdoor installation of the sculpture appears to be feasible, based on what we have been told, assuming certain installation considerations are met and that a routine maintenance program by a trained conservation team is upheld.

Artist:	Agustín Cárdenas
Title:	<i>Le Couple</i>
Date:	1991 (as appears on the inscribed signature)
Materials:	Carrara Marble
Dimensions:	59" x 24 1/2" x 24 1/2", separate base (unknown if included with artwork): 16" x 34" x 25"
Distinguishing Marks:	Inscribed artist signature "AC 91" on the left side of the marble sculpture base

DESCRIPTION: The artwork in question is a single component carved marble sculpture by the artist Agustín Cárdenas. The sculpture has two (2) vertically oriented, interlocking abstract elements. The marble appears white with light grey veining in photographs with a smooth polished finish.

BACKGROUND & DOCUMENT REVIEW: RLA understands that the City of Coral Gables is interested in acquiring the described above; however, there are concerns about the artwork being placed outdoors. A viable indoor location has not yet been able to be identified by the city.

Documentation on the sculpture was provided to RLA. Said documents include an artwork acquisition proposal produced by Latin Art Core¹ and an appraisal report submitted by Fine Art Appraiser Rochi Llanaez.² Neither of these firms is trained in conservation or technical material expertise, so RLA is extrapolating information from prior information.

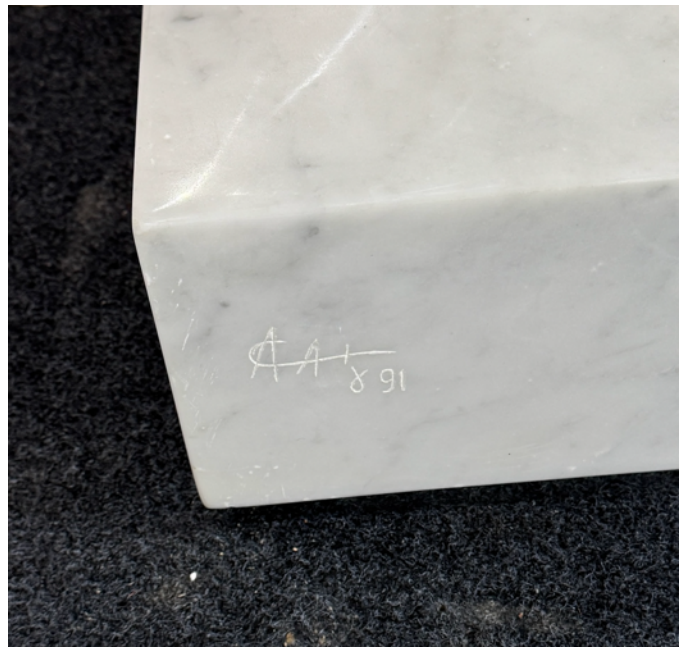
The artwork acquisition proposal provides a brief description of the artist, tombstone information on the artwork, high resolution overall images of the artwork including a detail image of the artist's signature, and copies of the artwork's certificate of authenticity.

Of relevance from the appraisal report is information on the sculpture's overall condition as it relates to its value. The report states that there were "no visible chips, cracks, structural fractures, or material losses." Furthermore, "The marble retains its natural crystalline integrity, with no evidence of sugaring (granular disintegration), staining, or efflorescence."

ARTWORK IMAGES:



*Overall image of sculpture.
Image from appraiser's report.*



*Detail of artist's signature at the base of the sculpture. Possible
minor scratches are visible on the corner of the sculpture.
Image from appraiser's report.*

¹ "Artwork Acquisition Proposal: Presented to The City of Coral Gables", Latin Art Core Fine Art Gallery: 1646 SW 8th St. Miami, FL 33135, April 28, 2025.

² "Appraisal Report of Personal Property for Financial Decision Making to City of Coral Gables Historical Resources and Cultural Arts Division 2025," Fine Art Appraiser Rochi Llanaez, ISA AM International Society of Appraisers, Accredited Member, August 22, 2025.

ARTWORK MATERIALS:

Marble can be a good material for outdoor sculpture, as evidenced by the large number of works placed in cemeteries and on the facades of buildings. That said, it can erode in full sun, from the thermal effects of heat; and grow mold and lichens when placed in shaded locations with high humidity. Low-porosity finishes, such as this one, are less likely to be impacted by biogrowths, but they can occur nonetheless. Moreover, staining from bird droppings and berries from overhanging trees is an issue. Applied graffiti and spilled beverages can be mitigated through application of a coating, but incised graffiti and scratching from climbing or touching cannot.

This sculpture appears to have a high polish finish. This should aid in water runoff, however future conservation treatments may need to include repolishing and coating to protect this surface.

ARTWORK SITING:

The ideal location for marble pieces by Cardenas is indoors with climate control. If placed inside, the sculpture should be installed away from windows and any potential moisture source (i.e. HVAC vents, pipes). RLA understands that this artwork is being considered for outdoor siting and therefore this report focuses on considerations for outdoor installation.

If the artwork cannot be installed indoors, it should be understood that outdoor installation will expose the sculpture to the salt environment present in South Florida cities that are within 5 miles of the coast. RLA has performed maintenance on another similar marble sculpture by this artist for over twelve (12) years with minimal signs of deterioration. This sculpture was sited in a covered portico to a building on the University of Miami's main campus and received regular biannual maintenance by RLA which included careful cleaning and application of a biocide.

The following are overall recommendations for the artwork's proposed sites:

- The sculpture should be installed with as much distance as possible from any overhanging trees or other vegetation. This is particularly important if said trees could potentially drop berries onto the sculpture's surface as berries can be acidic resulting in etching and staining of the porous marble surface. Furthermore, trees can attract birds resulting in additional droppings on the sculpture.
- Nearby landscaping should be trimmed away from the sculpture. Avoid using heavy landscaping equipment near the sculpture.
- Consider siting the sculpture in a covered area, such as a building portico. This cover should provide protection from rainfall. The structure should not provide spaces (e.g. rafters) where birds can roost and deposit bird droppings.
- Consider siting the sculpture away from busy roads or areas where there are significant sources of exhaust particles and carbon pollution. This will prevent atmospheric soiling from staining the marble surface.

- All sprinkler heads must point away from the proposed artwork's location to mitigate them getting inadvertently hit with overspray. Ideally watering around the artwork should be via drip irrigation or hand watering in order to minimize routine wetting of artwork surfaces which promotes deposition of mineral deposits.
- The work should be lit at night. Consider adding dummy (non-functional) security cameras in the area to deter vandalism and people climbing on the artwork.
- Consider adding signage and some deterrent plantings or fencing to deter public interaction.

ARTWORK MAINTENANCE:

Maintenance is not optional for this work. We recommend inspection and treatment no less than once a year. Deferred maintenance will almost certainly result in conditions that become more time consuming and expensive to fix down the road.

Maintenance should include:

- Inspection for signs of wear, including deterioration of the marble (erosion, sugaring/disaggregation, cracking, soiling), and/or visitor interaction.
- A thorough cleaning of the sculpture using a conservation grade detergent followed by a distilled water rinse.
- If necessary, remove artifacts of interaction, such as stickers and markings, gum, with mechanical methods and organic solvents.
 - If such items cannot be removed with maintenance methods, include recommendations for further treatment and associated costs.
- Where applicable, the reapplication of conservation grade protective waxes, non-toxic biocides, and/or sealants per conservator recommendations following an initial on-site assessment.
- Written and photograph documentation of the sculpture conditions.

<u>Estimated Cost for Annual Maintenance:</u>	<u>1x per year: \$1,400.00.00 – 1,900.00</u>
	<u>2x per year: \$2,800.00 – \$3,600.00</u>

Outside of maintenance by a trained conservation team, recommendations for interim maintenance include the following:

- The sculpture should be monitored continually for signs of deterioration (cracks, staining) and/or public interaction (chips, graffiti). If any of the conditions are noted, document with photographs and contact a Conservator. In the event that any damage results in fragmentation of the artwork, all fragments should be saved.
- City staff should NOT attempt to remove graffiti.
- The sculpture should be rinsed regularly with distilled water, or filtered tap water, if distilled is not available. If possible, monthly rinsing is recommended. Rinsing should also be carried out after any strong storms.

- Bird droppings should be removed from sculpture surfaces as they contain acidic properties that can etch and stain patina and painted surfaces if left on the surface. RLA recommends removing bird droppings as soon as possible using the following method:
 - i. Soften first with a damp rag, microfiber cloths, or paper towel.
 - ii. Gently wipe with minimal pressure.
 - iii. Rinse area with filtered water.
- If possible, standing water and organic matter should be removed to prevent surface staining and deterioration of the marble.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS:

- Consider the proposed installation method including all materials, including any pins, adhesives, mortars, base materials, installation heights, etc. RLA recommends having a Conservator review final installation plans.
- RLA recommends having an initial assessment of the artwork as soon as possible following installation to document baseline conditions of the sculpture.
- If a concrete pad is to be poured prior to the artwork's installation, confirm that it has cured for an appropriate amount of time. Slope the pad so that the water does not pool on its surface. It is recommended that the pad be coated with a clear water repellent to prevent fungal growth build up.
- Provide engineering diagrams and the wind loads the work is rated for. If desired, prepare a plan for hurricane protection either by securing, wrapping, or removal.

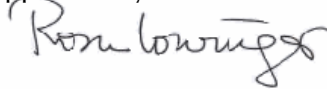
Thank you for the opportunity to care for your collection. Please contact us with any questions.

Prepared by:



Caroline Dickensheets,
Miami Managing Conservator

Approved by:



Rosa Lowinger, Conservator